

"THE NORTH CAROLINA NAVY."

Mrs. R. B. D. Crander-

When North Carolina seceded from the Union, May 20, 1861, and joined forces with the Confederacy, or Confederate States of America, she at once began to strengthen her coastal fortifications, and it was well that she did for the first armed conflicts within her borders were on the coast.

The North Carolina Navy at first consisted of four small gunboats, each carrying one gun. These, the "Winslow," the "Raleigh," the "Beaufort," and the "Ellis" were originally steamers purchased in Norfolk. The "Winslow" was in commission by June, 1861. These four little boats under brave and daring commanders like Thomas M. Crossan were busy and saucy and were known as the "Mosquito fleet." In all, the little fleet captured eight schooners, seven barks and a brig.

Flag-Officer William F. Lynch was placed in command of the Naval defences, and the following named boats added to the fleet: The "Curlew," the "Seabird," the Junaluski," the "Forrest" and the "Fannie." These with the exception of the "Winslow" which was wrecked and lost in November, 1861, operated in the sounds until the fall of Roanoke Island February 8, 1862. The "Appomattox," the "Raleigh" and the "Beaufort" escaped to Norfolk, the "Ellis" was captured, and the others destroyed or lost in one way or another. In November, 1862, the "Ellis" under the command of Lieut. Cushing (W. B.) of the Union Navy, ran aground in New River and was destroyed to prevent the Confederates recovering her.

Canal tugboats carrying a single gun also served as warships. No coal could be spared for their boilers so the crew had to stop and

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cut green wood as they went.

In 1862, shortly after he became Governor, Gov. Vance, (Z. B.) took the advice of Adjutant-General Martin (J. G.) and sent John White of Warrenton to England to purchase a swift steamer to be used as a blockade-runner. This move was bitterly opposed by some and even declared unlawful, but it was a wise one as was afterward shown. Capt Crossan (T. M.) also went to command the vessel. The "Lord Clyde", described by Gov. Vance as "long-legged", was purchased for \$190,000 and renamed the "Ad-Vance". After the necessary changes were made she was painted dark grey, coaled with Nassau or smokeless coal, and in due time arrived at Wilmington, N. C., with her first cargo. After the fifth trip Gov. Vance sold a half interest for \$130,000 with which he redeemed State bonds. Eleven successful trips were made. The vessel was lost on her twelfth trip because the captain of the Confederate cruiser "Tallahassee" who was short of coal, took her reserve supply of smokeless coal. This obliged the "Ad Vance" which was the most famous of the blockade-runners, to use North Carolina coal and leave a trail of smoke.

North Carolina also owned an interest in the "Hansa" and the "Don", but their use was soon abandoned on account of the Confederate government seizing one half of each cargo.

Between November, 1861, and March, 1864, eighty four vessels were engaged in blockade-running. Some of the most successful were the "Siren", the "Robert E. Lee," the "Fannie", and the "Margaret and Jessie." Mr. James Sprunt in his "Chronicles of the Cape Fear River" gives the names of the more notable blockade-running vessels.

A number of the captured blockade-runners were put into the service of the Union. The famous "Ad Vance" became the "Frolic".

The "Ella and Annie" as the "Malvern" became Admiral Porter's flagship. Of those destroyed, the "Beauregard" and the "Venus" lie at Carolina Beach, the "Modern Greece" at New Inlet, the "Antonica" on Frying Pan Shoals, the "Spunky" and the "Georgiana McCall" on Caswell Beach, and the "Hebe" and the "Dee" between Masonboro and Wrightsville. The "Underwriter", a converted tug-boat and the most powerful of the Union boats, stationed at New Bern, was captured by Col. J. Taylor Ward, and a picked crew, January 20, 1864. Not having time to get up her steam they were forced to burn her.

With so many Union soldiers in the state, conditions had demanded some action by the Confederacy for more than a year. Gen. Hoke (R. F.) advised an attack upon Plymouth and was anxious to have some naval aid in the attack. He had heard that a strange craft was being built at Edward's Ferry on the Roanoke River above Plymouth for Capt. J. W. Cooke by Gilbert Elliot of Elizabeth City, a nineteen year old youth, assisted by Peter Evans Smith after plans prepared by John L. Porter. The same was begun early in 1863 but the plan being a new one was deemed foolish by so many that it had not been finished. At Gen. Hoke's urgent presentation of his need, the ram was made ready for battle as soon as possible. On the morning of April 19, 1864, the ram "The Albemarle" reached Plymouth; at once she struck the "Southfield" and sank her. Lieut. Commander Flusser on the "Miami" then personally fired the first shot at the "Albemarle" and was killed by fragments of shells rebounding from her armored sides. The "Miami" then retreated under fire, after which the "Albemarle" turned its guns on the town and the land forces storming the forts compelled the surrender of the town by the Union occupants.

On May 5, 1864, the "Albemarle" came down the river (Roanoke) with a troopship and captured vessel loaded with coal and provisions.

About ten miles from the mouth of the river she met the Union Squadron and while not destroyed was considerably injured. Two of the Union vessels were put out of commission and finally the squadron retired. After the "Albemarle's" smokestack had been riddled with shot she was unable to get up steam to return to Plymouth until several barrels of fat meat had been added to her fuel. Her homecoming as well as her building was an achievement. On the night of October 27, 1864, the "Albemarle" while moored near Plymouth was torpedoed by Lieut. Cushing (W. B.), the most daring and energetic of the Union commanders. Refusing to surrender, he escaped by diving and swimming under water. Later the ram was raised and towed to Norfolk but was never again employed in warfare.

The twin rams "The Raleigh" and the "North Carolina" of the Cape Fear were not much of a success.

Now we come to Fort Fisher. As early as 1862, the Navy Department of the Union had sought to interest the War Department in a joint attack upon the fort. In the early fall of 1864, Gen. Grant approved the plan, but it was not until January 13, 1865, that the final bombardment began. Two days later, January 15, 1865, the fort fell. Our Gibraltar was no more! Afterward, only one boat succeeded in slipping in.

Not a large Navy, but where could a better one have been found?

222